



National Transportation Safety Board

The Chairman's Corner

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Friday, September 9, 2005



Board Meeting on General Aviation Safety Study and Aviation Accident Report

On Wednesday, September 7, the Safety Board adopted a safety study that examined risk factors associated with general aviation (GA) flights into conditions of bad weather and poor visibility. "Weather-related accidents are a leading cause of aviation fatalities, and the Safety Board has long been concerned with the disproportionate number of fatal accidents associated with weather," said Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker.

For the study, NTSB investigators collected data from 72 GA accidents that occurred between August 2003 and April 2004. Information about these accidents was compared to a matching group of 135 nonaccident flights operating under the same conditions. The results suggest that a pilot's performance history, including previous aviation accidents or incidents, as well as FAA knowledge or practical test failures, are associated with an increased risk of being involved in weather-related GA accidents. The study also found that pilots who obtain their first pilot certificates earlier in life, or those who obtain higher levels of certifications or instrument ratings, are at reduced risk compared to other pilots.

As a result of the study, the Safety Board called on the Federal Aviation Administration to ensure that pilots have a minimum level of proficiency to recognize and respond to weather hazards. The Board also asked the FAA to identify and provide additional support for pilots whose performance indicates increased risk, and to improve its pre-flight weather services.

Also last week, the Safety Board determined that the probable cause of the May 9, 2004, accident involving Executive Airlines flight 5401 was the captain's failure to execute proper techniques to recover from bounced landings and his subsequent failure to execute a go-around.

Flight 5401 was doing business as an American Eagle flight from Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, to San Juan, Puerto Rico. During the landing, the airplane bounced twice before coming to a complete stop on a grassy area about 217 feet from the runway's centerline and about 4,317 feet beyond the runway. The captain was seriously injured, and the first officer, 2 flight attendants, and 16 of the 22 passengers received minor injuries. Damage to the aircraft was substantial.

During its investigation, the Safety Board learned that the left aileron surface position data recorded by the accident airplane's flight data recorder was invalid even though the aircraft was modified on August 7, 2001, with position sensors and associated hardware required by a supplemental type certificate (STC).

As a result of the accident, the Safety Board recommended that the FAA require all airlines to incorporate bounced landing recovery techniques in their flight manuals and teach these techniques during initial and recurrent training.

The Safety Board also issued two recommendations to the FAA that would require replacement of aileron sensors installed in accordance with the STC (ST01310NY) and call for a review of all FDR systems that have been modified by an STC to ensure that the sensors provide reliable data.



May 9, 2004, accident involving Executive Airlines flight 5401



A special thanks to **Paul Sledzik, Lauren Peduzzi, Sharon Bryson, Ted Lopatkiewicz, Don Chupp, Brian Fiffick, and Eric Grosf** for their work supporting the hurricane Katrina relief efforts through the Board's participation in the National Response Plan.



Paul Sledzik addresses victim identification and notification issues in the Family Assistance course.

NTSB ACADEMY

New Record Set for Family Assistance Course

A new attendance record was set for the **Transportation Disaster Response - Family Assistance** course (August 9-11). The Academy welcomed 118 participants from 8 countries to a course that covers the entire family assistance process involved in a major transportation disaster. Previously, the class size was capped at 70. It was opened up to accommodate the increased interest from airlines and other transportation providers worldwide.

In addition to the legislated responsibility of investigating transportation accidents, in 1996 Congress charged the NTSB with coordinating the Family Assistance response at all major aviation accidents in the United States. The NTSB Office of Transportation Disaster Assistance (TDA) developed the Family Assistance course to educate air carriers about their legislated responsibilities in this area and how to most effectively perform these crucial functions. It is in the classroom forum that transportation providers and first responders gain an understanding of how to best manage the range of issues they will likely be confronted with, not just at the accident site, but for years afterwards.

TDA has been presenting this course through the Academy for 5 years. As word-of-mouth about the value of the course has grown, so has the attendance. TDA Director **Sharon Bryson** explains it this way: "Part of the reason that the enrollments have increased significantly is because of the recognition, internationally, of the importance of family assistance. Both foreign and domestic carriers, and increasingly those involved in emergency response for other modes of transportation, like cruise lines and railroads in particular, are planning for an organized and cooperative family assistance response."

In fact, several airlines consider the course content so crucial to the family assistance aspect of their emergency response plan that they have made participation in it mandatory for key personnel. And those who took the course 3 to 5 years ago are now coming back to take it again to learn about the new developments in the field.

"One of the reasons that the course is appealing is that it offers a very practical and pragmatic approach to carrier accident response," said Bryson. "And in addition to hearing from those of us at the Safety Board, participants learn from the organizations that we bring in, like the FBI, HHS, DoD and the Red Cross, to name a few. It's one of the best ways they have to stay on top of the most current information."

The course, normally offered twice a year, will be held three times in 2006 in response to the increased demand. A special thanks to Sharon Bryson and the other TDA presenters: **Erik Groszof**, **Brian Fiffick**, and **Paul Sledzik**.



Sharon Bryson, Director, Office of Transportation Disaster Assistance

NTSB Welcomes New Employees



Mr. Liam J. LaRue
Transportation Safety Specialist
(Marine Investigative Analyst) in
the Office of Marine Safety



Mr. Hilton W. Hall, Jr.
Transportation Safety Specialist (ATC)
in the Office of Aviation Safety



Mr. Daniel M. Catlin
Confidential Assistant in the
Office of the Vice Chairman

Update on Most Wanted Safety Recommendations

Kevin Quinlan, Danielle Roeber, and Stephanie Perkins attended the Annual Meeting of the Governors Highway Safety Association and discussed State legislative initiatives anticipated in the 2006 State legislatures.

The Board has been invited to testify before a select committee of the Arkansas State House Public Transportation Committee on school bus/grade crossing safety.

The Board also provided a letter of support for the child booster seat bill considered by the Wisconsin Assembly Highway Safety Committee on August 31st.